

Sasscer's House
Upper Marlboro, Maryland
Prince Georges Co.

HABS No.
MD 667

HABS
MD.

17-MARCU

7.

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Washington, D.C.

Historic American Buildings Survey
Delos H. Smith, District Officer
1707 Eye Street, N.W., Wash., D. C.

Addendum To:
SASSCER'S HOUSE
(Kingston X David Craufurd House)
5415 Old Crain Highway
Upper Marlboro
Prince Georges County
Maryland

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SASSCER'S HOUSE
(Kingston) (David Craufurd House)

HABS NO. MD-667

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Location: 5415 Old Crain Highway, Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County, Maryland

Present Owner: Mrs. Felicita Powers (of same address)

Present Use: Private residence

Significance: Kingston, as the house is popularly known, is one of the oldest remaining structures in the town of Upper Marlboro. The original structure is believed to have been constructed before 1730. In addition to its significance as a rare survival of an early settlement type dwelling, it is of interest for its mid 19th-century Gothic Revival or "Cottage style" renovation. Still intact from this period is the applied board-and-batten siding, and decorative gingerbread bargeboards in the eaves and dormers. Despite these decorative changes, however, its original 18th century, one-and-a-half story configuration has not been altered.

It is also of historical significance for its association with the Craufurd and Sasscer families, both prominent in local law and politics, and as military men, merchants and tobacco planters.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Ca. 1730 with 1859 renovations. The property was acquired by David Craufurd, in 1728 and 1729 (Deed M:284, 451, 586). Based on early property assessments and structural investigation of the house, some believe there may have been a dwelling already on the property which Craufurd added to. Evidence of a new (or at least greatly enlarged) house is given by a 1735 mortgage which states "the new dwelling house of the said David Craufurd in Upper Marlborough Town" (Deed T:297). Furthermore, an inventory of his personal property at the time of his death in 1749 gives a room by room description which depicts a fairly sizable house

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including hall, hall closet, passage, small room below, great room below, room above, etc. (Inventory DD #2:125, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md). The house was sold in 1859 to Dr. Frederick Sasscer and it was at this point that the Gothic Revival renovations were made (Deed FS#1:306 & 323).

2. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1728/29 Deed M:284, 451 and 586.
John Miller and Arnold Livers
To
David Craufurd
"The Meadows" with Lovers part of the lot
having "...houses, edifices, buildings,
orchards, gardens..."
- 1749 David Craufurd dies intestate and the dwelling
with approx. 700 acres passes to his son,
David Craufurd
- 1774 David Craufurd has the property resurveyed and
patented as "Kingston Park"
- 1801 Will T#1:483, Administration 1810
David Craufurd (Jr.)
To
David Craufurd (III)
"To my son, David Craufurd... the tract of
land called "Kingston Park" with the tract of
land which I purchased of William Sprigg Bowie
both tracts or parcels of land containing
about 700 acres lying in Prince Georges County
near the town of Upper Marlboro... also... my
dwelling house, out house with all the lots
and other improvements which I have in the
town of Upper Marlboro..."
- 1859 Deeds FS #1:306 & 323
Heirs of David Craufurd (III)
To
Dr. Frederick Sasscer
Described as the dwelling house and ten acres
in Upper Marlboro, "where the said Sasscer now
resides."
- 1888 Dr. Frederick Sasscer dies, leaving a wife,
Rosalie Ghiselin Sasscer and children:
Frederick, Jr., John H.S., Ellen D., Elizabeth

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G., Selwyn, and (Dr.) Reverdy Sasscer, as his heirs at law. Elizabeth G., wife of Thomas Vervan Clagett acquires the family home, Kingston.

- 1941 Administration #6984, died 14 February 1941, Elizabeth S. Clagett. Her heirs-at-law are her husband, T. Van Clagett and their children T. Van Clagett, Jr. and Lansdale G. Clagett.
- 1947 Will, Administration #8552, died 18 January 1947, T. Van Clagett. All his property to T. Van Clagett, Jr., in trust for the use and benefit of the said T. Van Clagett, Jr. and Lansdale G. Clagett.
- 1960 Deed (straw) 2509:174, 28 November 1960
Bessie May Wyvill
To
T. Van Clagett, Jr. and Felicita B. Clagett
- 1963 Will, Administration #15,124, died 24 October 1963, T. Van Clagett, Jr. All his property to his wife, Felecita B. Clagett and their children.

3. Original plans and construction: The walls of the northwest room of the house are nearly twice as thick as the other interior walls (and thicker than any other outside walls), suggesting that this may have been built first (perhaps this was Mr. Livers' dwelling to which Craufurd added his "new" dwelling). Assuming that a small dwelling was constructed by Arnold Livers prior to David Craufurd's purchase of the property, the first "addition" which would probably amount to the majority of the current structure, sometime between his 1728-29 purchase of the property and 1735 when a mortgage describes the "new dwelling house."

4. Alterations and additions: Alterations were made ca. 1859 which included the Gothic Revival decorative detailing. This is documented by a notice which appeared in the Planters' Advocate, August 10, 1859,

We also notice the repairs in progress for Dr. Frederick Sasscer upon the old frame house lately purchased by him from David Craufurd. The house is also being finished in the cottage style. This is

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a substantial building, in the design of which utility has been kept in view. It is located in the "west end" of our village, and its elevated position adds much to the general effect.

B. Historical Context:

Kingston is among the earliest surviving structures built in the town of Upper Marlboro, which was created by an act of the Maryland General Assembly in 1706. The property included the ca. 1730 dwelling and approximately 700 acres of tobacco farmland. It was unique in that it was an in-town plantation house, with the house on the edge of town, just outside the platted lots, and the tobacco plantation property stretching out behind it. Upper Marlboro was the heart of the rich tobacco growing land of Prince George's County, and the site of one of the original tobacco warehouses and inspection stations.

Because Upper Marlboro was among the first settlements in the county, sites such as Kingston reflect its early growth and development. In fact, the house retains its definite 18th-century form (its one-and-a-half-story configuration with sloping roof to form a front porch, also with dormers, and its central hall plan). This simple early house form, executed in wood frame, was at one time a common form, now rarely found. These early settlement dwellings were generally replaced with larger, more permanent structures. Kingston, however, has survived. It remained a simple dwelling of early settlement until the mid 19th century when it was remodeled, rather than replaced. It then became a high-style Gothic Revival cottage with the addition of board-and-batten siding, bargeboards and other decorative features (inside and out).

Kingston was remodeled in the Gothic Revival or "Cottage" style, as it was sometimes referred to, in 1859, during the height of the style's popularity (approximately 1840-1870). It experienced a limited popularity, being used mostly in rural and suburban architecture. Gothic Revival was a European-inspired, romantic style, harkening back to Gothic England. It was popularized by the premier landscape and country residence architect of the day, Andrew Jackson Downing, in his pattern books, Cottage Residences (1842) and Architecture of Country Houses (1850). Downing believed in the sanctity of the home as the family's refuge from urban vice. The

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residence, and the surrounding countryside in which it was to be set, was to be a harmonious blending of buildings and landscape. The picturesque Gothic Cottage, Downing believed, reflected the ideals of country living.

The property on which Kingston sits was patented as "The Meadows" by Col. Ninian Beall in 1694. A large portion was sold to David Craufurd in 1728-29 by John Miller and Arnold Livers. The deed stated that part of the lot had, "...houses, edifices, buildings, orchards, gardens..." (Deed M:248, 451 & 586). By 1735, Craufurd received a mortgage for "the new dwelling house of the said David Craufurd in Upper Marlborough Town" (Deed T:297). David Craufurd's property included approximately 700 acres of tobacco farmland. In addition, he was a merchant in Upper Marlboro and served as a Justice on the County Court in 1729-1730 and 1733-1739. He died (without a will) in March of 1749 at which point the property passed on to his son, David Craufurd (Jr.).

Like his father, David, Jr., operated a store in Upper Marlboro, and he served as a Justice of the County Court (1761-1779). He was also a member of the Convention of Maryland 1774-75 and a delegate to the General Assembly in 1780. In 1774 he had the property resurveyed and patented as "Kingston Park" from which the current name was derived. According to his will, he held extensive landholdings in Montgomery as well as Prince George's County. David, Jr., died in 1801 leaving the Upper Marlboro property to his son, David Craufurd, III (Administration #1810).

David Craufurd (III) was known as Col. Craufurd after his service in the militia during the War of 1812. David III is listed as having over 900 acres on which he operated a tobacco farm. He also served as a director of the Planters Bank. He passed away in July of 1841. Because he had no children, according to his will, "to my beloved cousins, Miss Sarah Forrest and her sister, Mrs. Mary M. Kearney, of Washington City, D.C., all my landed estate whereon I now reside in Prince George's County, Maryland" (Admin. #510).

The heirs of Col. David Craufurd conveyed the house on ten acres to Dr. Frederick Sasscer in April of 1859. Dr. Sasscer then proceeded to remodel Kingston. According to the Planters Advocate, 10 August 1959, "We also notice the repairs in progress for Dr. Frederick Sasscer upon

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the old frame house lately purchased by him from David Craufurd. This house is lately being finished in the cottage style. This is a substantial building, in the design of which utility has been kept in view. It is located at the 'west end' of our village, and its elevated position adds much to the general effect." Frederick Sasscer married Rosalie Ghiselin and together they had seven children. One son, Frederick, Jr., was well known as a lawyer and owner/publisher of The Prince George's Enquirer. Dr. Sasscer died in 1888 and his wife, Rosalie, in 1909.

The property has remained in the family since, passing eventually to one of their daughters, Elizabeth, the wife of Thomas Vervan Clagett (known as T. Van Clagett). T. Van Clagett was a prominent attorney, also serving as a Town Commissioner and as a Judge. They had two children, T. Van, Jr. and Lansdale Ghiselin Clagett. Elizabeth died in 1941, followed by her husband in 1947. The property was eventually conveyed to T. Van Clagett, Jr. Kingston is now the property of his widow, Felicita Clagett Powers.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Kingston is an interesting mix of 18th- and, 19th-century architectural trends. It is an early settlers style residence of ca. 1730, following the southern tidewater tradition, which was made over into a stylish Gothic Revival cottage with the addition of board-and-batten siding, bargeboards and other decorative elements ca. 1859. In interior plan, it is basically a Georgian plan with a center hall with two rooms to either side, although the rooms are of unequal size. This may be due to the fact that the house supposedly evolved over time.

2. Condition of the fabric: Kingston appears to be in good condition with its distinguishing architectural features intact.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The house has a square, one-and-a-half-story, five-bay-wide main block, approximately 47'

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x 34' with a gable roof that kicks out to form porches on the front and rear. To the north is a rectangular one-story kitchen wing, approximately 41' x 16', four bays long with a gable roof.

2. Foundations: The foundations are of brick. The basement walls vary in thickness from approximately 12" to 15".

3. Walls: The main block has wide flush horizontal board siding to the east front and west rear. The sides, north and south, are of board-and-batten siding with chamfered battens. In the kitchen wing there is board-and-batten siding on the front and rear and random-width lapping weatherboard siding to the side.

4. Structural system, framing: The house is of wood-frame construction, presumably of post and beam, due to its age.

5. Porches: A porch runs the length of the facade of the main block. The roof is formed by an extension of the principal roof of the house which kicks out to create a porch. It is supported in front by six squared, fluted posts resting on pedestals, with an architrave top. Between the posts are elliptical arches. There was once a balustrade (as seen in the 1936 HABS photograph) which is now gone. The porch has a wooden floor resting on brick piers. A porch also runs across the rear of the main block. It has plain wooden posts which rest on a brick floor on the ground. The rear entry is reached by a stoop under the porch.

6. Chimneys: There are two exterior chimneys at each gable end of the main block. At the south end, the chimneys have weatherings to either side and stacks separate from the end wall. There is simple corbelling at the top and about two-thirds of the way up the stack. The slightly extended brick foundation has molded brick along the top. The bonding is English. The chimneys at the north end are more widely spaced and are joined by a pent. Like the others, the stacks are separate from the wall. There is a small four-over-two-light double-hung sash window in the pent. The chimney stacks have the same extended foundation with molded brick and are also laid in English bond. Lastly, there is a small interior brick chimney at the north gable end of the kitchen wing.

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7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The main doorway, probably added along with the Gothic Revival ornamentation during the Victorian-era renovation, has a double-door entry with a full transom-light entablature. The transom consists of five large lights below which is a dentilled cornice. There are narrow, three-light sidelights with narrow molded panels below. The entire doorway has a plain surround. The double doors have molded panels, round-arched top and octagonal. The rear entry has a transom light and a plain surround. There is an entry into the kitchen at the east front of the wing. It has a plain board surround and a six-panel door.

b. Windows: The typical window in the main block has a large six-over-six-light double-hung sash. The facade of the main block has two windows to either side of the central entry, with louvered wooden shutters. They have plain surrounds and sill, and no lintel (because they extend to the porch roof). The windows at the sides are also six-over-six-light double-hung sash but smaller. They have plain narrow-board surrounds. In the north gable end is a four-over-two-light double-hung sash window to the east of center. There is a narrower, four-over-four-light double-hung-sash window on the first floor at the south end. The kitchen wing has smaller, narrower, six-over-six-light double-hung-sash windows with plain board surrounds. There is a four-light casement window to either side of the chimney block in the north gable end.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The main block has a steep-pitched side-gable roof. The principal roof kicks out to form the roof of the porches, front and rear. The kitchen wing also has a side-gable roof. Both are covered with asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice, eaves: The eaves overhang in the main block and have decorative barge boards in a wave-like scroll pattern. There is no cornice since the principal roof kicks out to form the roofs of the front and rear porches. In the kitchen wing there is a plain, narrow boxed cornice, front and rear

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and no overhang in the gable end.

c. Dormers: There are three evenly spaced dormers across the east front and west rear of the roof. They have six-over-six light double-hung sash windows and gable roofs with the same, yet smaller-scale, scrolled barge boards that appear in the gable ends.

C. Description of Interior (based on sketched floor plans and National Register nomination, interior access denied):

1. Floor plans:

a. First floor: Kingston has a center-hall plan with two rooms to either side, the front rooms being larger than the back rooms. The center hall runs from front to rear. The winding stairway is off the center hall, beginning at the rear, southwest corner. The cellar stairway is underneath. The current living room is to the southeast front and the dining room is to the northeast front. Both have fireplaces along the exterior wall. The southwest room is entered through a doorway off the center hall, under the winding stairway. It too has a fireplace along the exterior side wall. A section of the northwest room, across from the stair, has been made into a bathroom. This room also joins with the dining room with an entry in the northeast corner where there is also a doorway, a few steps down, into the kitchen wing. The first room off the main house is the new kitchen. Through this room is the old kitchen at the north end with a boxed winder stairway into the attic above.

c. Cellar: The cellar has a similar floor plan as the first floor. It enters into the southwest room, the only room with a concrete floor. All the other rooms have dirt floors. The northwest room now houses the furnace which utilizes the flue at the north wall. To the east of the flue is an arched doorway into an area that formerly had a stairway to the outside entry. There is also a crawl space under the kitchen wing accessible from this short passageway. There is a short window between the northwest and northeast walls. The northeast room has a relieving arch for the fireplace above.

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2. Stairways: The main stairway begins at the southwest corner of the center hall. It is a partially enclosed winder stair. It rises up three steps along the west rear wall and then winds round along the south wall to the second floor. The handrail is unadorned and ends with a plain square newel post. The balusters are approximately one inch square, three per step. The area beneath the steps is panelled. There is a narrow, boxed winder stairway in the southwest corner of the old kitchen, to the attic space above.

3. Flooring: The floors in the center hall and in the two east front rooms are of wide pine boards. The two rear west rooms have narrow boards laid over the old flooring.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: There is a chair rail in the center hall. The cornice molding is a wider version of the chair rail.

5. Doorways and doors: The doorways have wide molded surrounds with six-panel doors (the smaller panel being to the center).

6. Decorative features, trim: There is an arch just west of the center point of the center hall. The pilasters are plain, with the capitals repeating the curves of the ceiling molding. In the northeast dining room is a round-arched cupboard to the east of the fireplace. It has four paneled doors: two, two-panel round-arched doors above and two single-panel doors below (the chair rail). There is plain molding around the cupboard. There are also a number of decorative mantels including a black marble mantel in the southeast (living) room.

7. Hardware: The hardware on the interior doors appears to be mid 19th century. Some of the doors in the cellar have HL hinges.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Kingston sits atop a hill just outside the downtown area, where Main Street meets the Old Crain Highway at the circle. It faces east towards town and is surrounded with trees, some of which are quite old and large. The site of Kingston is unusual in that it was a in-town plantation house. The dwelling

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sat on the edge of town with an extensive tobacco plantation to the west of it. The Hopkins Atlas of 1878 illustrates the relationship between Kingston and the town. Frederick Sasscer began selling off the property after he purchased it in 1859, though he continued to maintain a tobacco plantation. After the Civil War, when the tobacco economy was hit hard by the depleted labor force, more property was sold off. Kingston was eventually separated from the farming property, becoming strictly a residential site. The later 19th-century residences now surrounding Kingston were built on property once part of the Kingston plantation. A large farm still remains, part of the original property. This farm, along with the farm overseer's house, is still held by a branch of the Sasscer family.

2. Historic landscape design: There is a Craufurd family cemetery in the woods to the northwest of the house (in poor condition). There are a number of large, ancient trees on the lot surrounding the house.

3. Outbuildings: There is only one outbuilding remaining. It is a wood-frame meat house, approximately 10' x 16', which sits just west of the kitchen wing. It has a brick foundation, wide board siding and a pyramidal roof with a wide overhang.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views: HABS photographed Kingston on May 13, 1936, John O. Brostrup, photographer. Two views were taken, one of the northeast front elevation and the other of the south side elevation. The only noticeable change are the balusters that appear on the front porch in 1936, now gone; and the wood shingle roof from 1936.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Cook, Margaret W. National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form, Kingston, prepared March 1978.

Prince George's County Land Records (Deeds and Equity files as cited in text).

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Prince George's County Register of Wills (Wills and administrations as cited in text).

2. Secondary and published sources:

Bowie, Effie G. Across the Years in Prince George's County. Richmond: Garrett & Massie, Inc., 1947.

Hopkins, G.M. Hopkins Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland, Washington, D.C., 1878.

Planter's Advocate, "Improvement in Town and County," 10 August 1859.

Van Horn, R. Lee. Out of the Past. Riverdale, Maryland: Prince George's County Historical Society, 1976.

Virta, Alan. Prince George's County: A Pictorial History. Norfolk: Donning Company Publishers, 1984.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the Sasscer House or Kingston was undertaken as part of a cooperative project between the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert J. Kapsch, Chief, and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission on behalf of the Prince George's County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to document select sites throughout the county. A memorandum of agreement was signed in August of 1988 and the project, to span one year, began in January of 1989. The site selection was made by Gail Rothrock, director, and Susan G. Pearl, research historian, of the HPC. They also provided access to their historical research and information on file with the HPC, as well as their extensive knowledge of county history. The large format photography was undertaken by HABS photographer Jack E. Boucher. The historical report was prepared by Catherine C. Lavoie HABS historian who also accompanied the photographer into the field for on site investigations.